

Front Page Editor Page Other Page

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CIA Director Cannot Expect Fair Appraisal

After a little more than a year as director of Central Intelligence, William F. Raborn has resigned. Richard M. Helms, a career man in intelligence work, is the new chief.

The choice early last year of Raborn, a retired vice admiral, was not highly praised at the time. Since then Congress, some purported spokesmen for employees of the Central Intelligence Agency, and others have criticized him.

For all the general public knows, is allowed to know or ought to know, Adm. Raborn may have been the finest CIA-director yet.

Making its employees happy is not the sole purpose of any public agency, though massive efforts are made to plant this idea in the general consciousness.

Mollifying a few loud members of Congress is not the supreme test of an intelligence agency. Political success does not turn a man into an expert in the most crucial and delicate kind of secret work imaginable.

There will always be those to praise and those to frown upon any endeavor. When most of the record is secret, including part of the record of matters which do become known in some version or other, it becomes difficult to judge.

We can only hope that President Johnson is making the right move at this time. But if he is, then that means that his original choice of Adm. Raborn was not particularly fortunate.

Where there cannot be a full public record, there can't be a fair appraisal.